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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [IV](#)
SUBJECT: COTE D'IVOIRE: OBASANJO AND GBAGBO ISSUE
COMMUNIQUE ON NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND STREET DEMONSTRATIONS

Classified By: POL/ECON Jim Wojtasiewicz, reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (U) Nigerian President Obasanjo made a brief visit to Abidjan the evening of January 18, and met at the airport with President Gbagbo. Also present were Prime Minister Charles Konan Banny, UN Special Representative of the Secretary General Pierre Schori, South African Special

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Representative for the Mediator of the African Union Silumko Sokupa, and the local representative of the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS Raph Uwechue.

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¶2. (U) After the meeting, the two presidents issued a communique which:

-- declares that the International Working Group does not have the authority to dissolve the National Assembly, and that it did not dissolve the National Assembly at its January 15 meeting;

-- calls on President Gbagbo and Prime Minister Banny to continue their consultations in search of a political solution, which will be communicated to the International Working Group and the nation;

-- calls on the population to leave the streets and return to their homes, and to return to work on January 19;

-- expresses the appreciation of President Gbagbo, the Prime Minister, and the heads of other Ivoirian state institutions to President Obasanjo for his constant attention and concern for Cote d'Ivoire.

¶3. (C) Comment: This appears to be a victory for President Gbagbo and the protesters he called out into the streets. However, it has had the beneficial impact of reducing tensions, and the barricades have begun to be removed. It does not actually leave Gbagbo a completely free hand to extend the mandate of the Assembly, because to do so would put him on a collision course with the Security Council, assuming the Council approves language in the Presidential Statement being circulated today that endorses the January 15 communique of the International Working Group. Obasanjo's intervention in Cote d'Ivoire's current crisis did little to bolster the authority of the Prime Minister, even though it was the African Union, which he currently heads, that called for the new prime minister to have "full powers." It will also undermine the International Working Group, which Obasanjo's foreign minister co-chairs. End Comment.
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